



Mental Health Equity Project

**The
Advonet
Group**

Providing Independent Advocacy

**Christmas and
New Year
2022/23:
Info for
autistic adults
in Leeds**

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Autism Hub opening days

Our last Autism Hub session before Christmas 2022 is a drop-in on **Tuesday 20th December** from **4pm-7pm**. We will provide refreshments, food and all our usual services including advocacy, information and signposting at the Hub.

From **Wednesday 21st December** to **Wednesday 4th January**, we will not be running any Autism Hub sessions. The next booked appointment-only Hub session will be on **Thursday 5th January** from **4pm to 7pm**.

Online Groups

On **Tuesday 20th December**, we will be running a **Seasonal Social** on Zoom from **6pm-7pm**. This will be facilitated by Leeds Autism AIM staff.

Due to Bank Holidays and staff absences, we will not be running our monthly Gaming and Coproduction Groups in December. These will return in the New Year.

Yorkshire Autism AIM will not be running their online Mental Health Peer Support Group in December. This will return in the New Year too.

Leeds Autism AIM's Peer Support group will go ahead on **Tuesday 3rd January** from **6pm-7pm** on Zoom.

Office opening hours

Leeds Autism AIM

During the Christmas/New Year 2022/23 period, we will be closed from Thursday 22nd December 2022 to Monday 2nd January 2023.

We will be running an online group on Tuesday 3rd January 2022, but other services will be limited until Wednesday 4th January 2023.

The Advonet Group

The Advonet Group, the charity that Leeds Autism AIM is part of, will be closed on weekends and Bank Holidays. These dates are:

- **Saturday 24th-Tuesday 27th December 2022**
- **Saturday 31st December 2022-Monday 2nd January 2023**

The office will be open normal hours from Tuesday 3rd January from 9am to 5pm. For any enquiries about advocacy, please call **0113 244 0606** or email **office@advonet.org.uk**.

More information is available on the Advonet Group's website: advonet.org.uk

Support from us

AIM's Seasonal Social

On Tuesday 20th December, we are running an online social group. It is from 6pm-7pm and will be on Zoom. The group is for autistic adults (aged 18+) in Leeds who get little or no funded support.

If you would like to join the group and have not made an online referral to Leeds Autism AIM before, please refer by visiting tinyurl.com/leedsautismaimreferral.

If you have made an online referral to us, you should get the details emailed to you if you want to join any of our online groups.

AIM's Discord Community

Throughout the festive period, our online community on the Discord app will be open. It is where you can connect with other members and do things like post thoughts in our different channels. Discord is free to join.

As with the Seasonal Social, if you haven't made a referral to us online before and want to join, please refer at the link above. If you have referred and want an invite, please email us at leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk.

The Advonet Group

Self-Advocacy resources

The Advonet Group have created a number of free self-advocacy tools. These include a meeting planner, phone call planner and complaint template, as well as guides on issues such as benefits, housing and debt.

To download them, please go to this link:

<https://advonet.org.uk/services/self-advocacy>

Advocacy referrals and enquiries

The Advonet Group provides, free, independent and confidential advocacy. Some of our advocates will be available during the Christmas and New Year period.

Referrals for Care Act Advocacy, Community Advocacy, Health Complaints Advocacy, Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) and Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) can now be made using a single online referral form on the Advonet Group's website here: <https://advonet.org.uk/referrals>

If you feel you or someone you work with needs advocacy but aren't sure what type, there is also an advocacy enquiry form. This can be accessed by clicking on the link above. You can also get more information about advocacy by calling the office on **0113 244 0606**.

Groups and Forums



As well as our Seasonal Social and online community on the Discord app, there are groups that autistic adults in Leeds can join that are happening either in person or online.

Autism groups on Facebook

There are a handful of Facebook groups led by and run for autistic people. One specific to Leeds is:

- **Leeds Autism and Asperger's Group** - this is led by autistic adults living in the Leeds area. Link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/leedsasd>

Please note that Leeds Autism AIM are not responsible for any of the content posted in this group. It is run independently of both Leeds Autism AIM and The Advonet Group.

Leeds Directory: Festive groups and events

Leeds Directory have a list of activities that regularly take place, as well as some seasonal ones taking place during Christmas. Activities listed include social groups, support groups and one-off events, either in-person or online.

You can find them all at this link: <https://www.leedsdirectory.org/s4s/WhereLive/Council?pagelid=5318>

#JoinIn Christmas Chat

Comedian Sarah Millican is leading a chat for anyone who is lonely or fancies talking to others on Christmas Day on Twitter. Anyone can join in if they have a Twitter account.

To take part in the Christmas Chat, all you need to do is post a message including the **#JoinIn** hashtag.

Fun activities



Creative groups and activities

- **Purple Patch Arts** have a number of free pictures you can download, print and colour in at home on their website! To download them all for free, visit this link: <https://purplepatcharts.org/colouring-pages/>

Autistic podcasts

- Autistic Empire's **Audible Autism** podcast has a few series of podcasts on a range of topics. All episodes are hosted by and interview autistic people: <http://audibleautism.autisticempire.com/>
- **The Autistic Advocate** has links to podcasts on a number of topics, including parenting, communication and masking. Find links to them all here: <https://theautisticadvocate.com/podcasts/>
- **The Squarepeg Podcast** sees autistic women and nonbinary people interviewed about late identification and navigating life in general: <https://squarepeg.community/podcast/>
- **Neurodivergent Chat** is about the issues faced by autistic people: <https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/neurodivergent-chat-1320349>

More autism podcasts hosted by autistic people can be found on the Autistic website: <https://www.autistic.com/asd-friendly-podcasts/>

Quizzes, games and puzzles

- Free board games can be found on **Board Game Arena**. Leeds Autism AIM regularly use this for the monthly Gaming Group, hosted on our Discord server. You can set up an account for free by going to the website: <https://boardgamearena.com/>

Support this Christmas



Christmas meals and events

- On **Thursday 22nd December**, FoodCycle Leeds Harehills are holding a community meal at **St Aidan's Church** on Roundhay Road. It's free to attend and starts at **6:30pm**
- FoodCycle Leeds Beeston are holding a community meal of their own at the Hamara Centre in Beeston on **Wednesday 21st December**. It is from **6:30pm** and is free to attend.
- On **Christmas Day**, Rainbow Junktion are hosting a Christmas Dinner. It is free or pay as you feel. It's at All Hallows Church in Hyde Park from **12 Noon-3pm**; reserve a place here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/christmas-dinner-at-rainbow-junktion-tickets-477178743467>
- The Meeting Point Café on 409 Harehills Lane are offering free meals for families to take away on Mondays from **4:15pm** and **5:30pm**

Cost of Living

- Leeds City Council have made a list of resources available to people in Leeds to help with the cost of living: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/campaign/cost-of-living>
- We have a list on the Leeds Autism AIM website. It lists support available with costs such as energy and food: <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/2022/09/16/support-with-the-cost-of-living-where-to-get-help/>

Warm Spaces in Leeds

- Leeds City Council have an interactive map of Warm Spaces across the city. Venues being used as spaces include libraries and community centres: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d6adbf692a7b4cfb8250b36bf8501a90/>

Xmas community events

- **MindWell** have a page on their website, listing community events taking place across Leeds in the run-up to and during Christmas. It is updated regularly by the MindWell team: <https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/myself/looking-after-your-wellbeing/mindwell-advent-calendar-2022-3/find-community-events-for-the-festive-period-2022-23/>
- **Leeds Inspired** also list events happening in the city during the festive period. It is on their Christmas List page and includes paid-for and free events including choirs and marketplaces. Find the list on their website here: <https://www.leedsinspired.co.uk/collection/leeds-inspired-christmas-list>
- **Leeds City Council** have published a list of free and low-cost activities for people in the city. It includes arts and crafts, outdoor events and film screenings. Find the list of activities here: <https://news.leeds.gov.uk/cost-of-living/free-and-low-cost-activities-for-people-in-leeds>
- The **Leeds City Museum** have a Christmas Cracker Trail throughout the festive period. It is a family-friendly event running until New Year's Eve, challenging you to find hidden crackers to piece together a mystery word! More info on the event is here: <https://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/events/leeds-city-museum/christmas-cracker-trail/?occurrence=2022-12-06>

Staying warm

- **Touchstone** have produced a Winter Wellbeing booklet for people in Leeds. It is in PDF format and has information on how to stay well when the weather is cold outside, as well as other areas like food, mental health and support for violence and abuse. To download a copy, please go to this link: <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2022/12/Leeds-Touchstone-Winter-Wellbeing-Booklet-2022.pdf>
- We have a guide of our own for staying warm and safe in emergency situations, including power cuts and cold snaps. It includes a checklist of items to have handy at home, as well as tips for ensuring you are safe and are able to have food, drink and other essentials: <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/2022/12/15/staying-safe-and-warm-during-emergencies-a-guide/>
- **Leeds City Council** have plenty of winter wellbeing resources on their website. They include cost of living links, information on COVID-19 and Flu, information on severe weather from the Met Office and links to mental health support: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/campaign/winter-wellbeing>

Food banks/Food aid

Leeds Food Aid Network

The **Leeds Food Aid Network (FAN)** have a lot of useful information on where to go for support if you are struggling to feed yourself. Here are some useful links:

- Emergency food: <https://leedsfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/find-emergency-food/>
- List of food banks: <https://leedsfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/food-banks/>
- Food drop-ins: <https://leedsfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/food-drop-ins/>
- Food pantries: <https://leedsfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/parish-pantries/>

Food banks in Leeds

- Leeds South & East Foodbank: <https://leedssouthandeast.foodbank.org.uk/>
 - Get help: <https://leedssouthandeast.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/>
 - Contact: <https://leedssouthandeast.foodbank.org.uk/contact-us/>
- Leeds North & West Foodbank: <https://leedsnorthandwest.foodbank.org.uk/>
 - Get help: <https://leedsnorthandwest.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/>
 - Contact: <https://leedsnorthandwest.foodbank.org.uk/contact-us/>
- Holbeck Foodbank: <https://holbeckfoodbank.org.uk/>
- **St Aidan's Church** in Harehills run a weekly foodbank on Saturdays from 10:30am-12 Noon - more info is here: https://www.staidan-leeds.org.uk/files/ugd/e90a9f_51503ccea7ce4bf5ae114e7ae7575823.pdf
- **St Vincent's Centre** in Leeds have information on making a referral for emergency food. For more info on making a referral, please click on this link: <https://www.svp.org.uk/microsite/st-vincents-leeds/emergency-support>

FoodWise Leeds

- Foodwise Leeds have advice on info about accessing affordable food and on eating healthily: <https://foodwiseleeds.org/>
 - Food Wise shopping: <https://foodwiseleeds.org/foodwise-shopping/>

Mental health support



Useful links

- **MindWell** have created an advent calendar running from the beginning of December to 2nd January. They have a tip for each day to help improve your mental health and wellbeing - it can be found on their website: <https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/myself/looking-after-your-wellbeing/mindwell-advent-calendar-2022-3/>
- The National Autistic Society have some resources on their website about preparing for Christmas. Many of them were written by autistic adults and are available here: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/christmas-resources>

Our Mental Health guide

We have produced a three-page guide to mental health support available to autistic adults in Leeds. It includes info on online, phone and in-person support, as well as a guide to accessing autism-specific counselling.

To download a PDF copy, please click on this link: <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2022/07/leeds-autism-aim-mental-health-guide-v5-01.02.2022.pdf>

Christmas survival kit

If you find aspects of this time of year hard to cope with, we have something to help you prepare. Our Christmas Survival Kit, first produced two years ago, has been updated and includes sections on preparing food and presents, social gatherings and loneliness.

To download and fill in a free copy of the Kit, please go to this link: <https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/2022/12/16/christmas-survival-kit-updated-for-2022/>

Helplines

Please note that not all of these numbers are available 24/7.

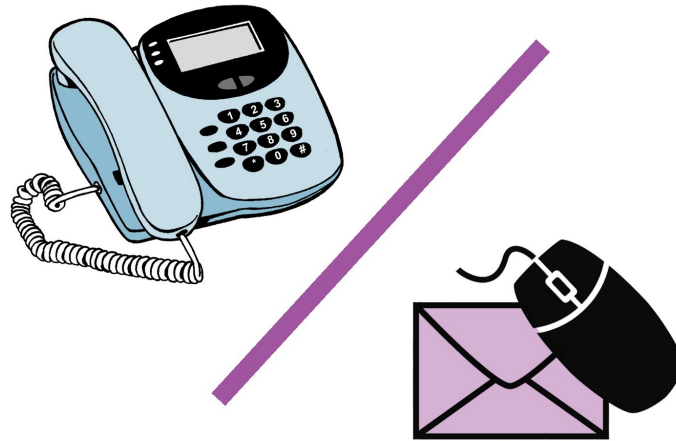
Crisis numbers

- **Dial House (Leeds Survivor-Led Crisis Service):** 0113 260 9328
- **Dial House at Touchstone:** 0113 249 4675
- **Teen Connect Helpline:** 0808 800 1212
- **Samaritans:** 116 123
- **Shelter Housing Advice Line:** 0808 800 4444
- **St George's Crypt:** 0113 245 9061
- **Support After Rape & Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL):** 0808 802 3344
- **SHOUT:** Text 85258
- **West Yorkshire 24-hour mental health helpline:** 0800 183 0558
- **Well-Bean 'Hope in a Crisis' Café (self-referral number):** 07760 173 476

Other useful numbers

- **NHS non-emergency helpline number:** 111
- **West Yorkshire Police non-emergency number:** 101
- **Chapeltown Citizens Advice & Leeds Citizens Advice:** 0808 278 78 78
- **Leeds City Council Adults and Health:** 0113 222 4401
- **National Autistic Society Helpline:** 0808 800 4104
- **Leeds Mind:** 0113 305 5800
- **Carers Leeds advice line:** 0113 380 4300
- **Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline:** 0300 330 0630
- **LGBT Foundation Helpline:** 0345 330 3030
- **Learning Disability Helpline:** 0808 808 1111
- **Cruse Bereavement Care:** 0808 808 1677
- **Money Buddies:** 0113 235 0276
- **Linking Leeds:** 0113 336 7612

Other useful support



Emergency support from Leeds City Council

If you need help with food, bills, claiming benefits or housing, Leeds City Council have information on their website about emergency support available and where to access it.

All the information is available at this link: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/benefits/help-with-food-and-bills>

Homelessness and housing

- **Shelter** have online resources around being homeless or needing support if you're in rented accommodation: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice
- **Engage Leeds** are a housing support service. They work all over the Leeds area: <https://engageleeds.org.uk/>
- **Green Doctor** is a service that can help people make repairs to their homes and offer advice on benefits and saving on energy costs: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/services/green-doctor/>

Debt and money worries

There are some organisations who are able to provide information and/or advice if you have any money worries:

- Chapeltown Citizens Advice: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/chapeltown/>
- Leeds Citizens Advice: <https://citizensadviceleeds.org.uk/>
- Money Buddies: <https://moneybuddies.org.uk/>
- StepChange: <https://www.stepchange.org/>
- Leeds Money Information Centre (MIC): <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/leedsmic>

Public transport

Bus services

- **Monday 19th-Friday 23rd:** Normal weekday timetable will operate
- **Saturday 24th:** Saturday timetable on most services. Services will gradually reduce from 6pm, ending entirely after 8pm
- **Sunday 25th:** No services will operate
- **Monday 26th:** Special services on main routes will run between 9am-6pm
- **Tuesday 27th:** Sunday service on most routes
- **Wednesday 28th-Friday 30th:** Saturday service on most routes
- **Saturday 31st:** Saturday service on most routes, reduced from 6pm and no services after 8pm
- **Sunday 1st:** No services will operate
- **Monday 2nd:** Sunday service on most routes

Train services

Please note that there will be industrial action by rail workers on the 24th-27th December, seeing services massively reduced. There will also be engineering works affecting services into and out of Leeds. Links to service changes are below.

- [Northern](#)
- [TransPennine Express](#)
- [CrossCountry](#)
- [LNER](#)

A summary of services can be found below. Please note that these may be subject to change, depending on engineering works and COVID-19 restrictions.

- **Friday 23rd:** Normal services with a few exceptions due to engineering works
- **Saturday 24th:** Almost no services due to industrial action
- **Sunday 25th:** No services
- **Monday 26th-Tuesday 27th:** Almost no services due to industrial action
- **Wednesday 28th-Friday 30th:** Most services will run a Saturday service, with some disruption expected
- **Saturday 31st:** Services due to stop from 6pm
- **Monday 1st:** Normal service with some providers - check the links above
- **Tuesday 2nd:** Normal services resume

Supermarkets

Please note that branch opening times can vary. To be certain, it's worth checking each supermarket chain's store locator feature on their website.

Any dates not listed below mean that the supermarkets will be open during their normal, non-Christmas hours.

- **Asda:** Saturday 24th - 6am-7pm. Closed on 25th. Monday 26th - 9am-6pm. Tuesday 27th - 8am-8pm. Saturday 31st - 12am-7pm. Sunday 1st - normally 10am-4pm. Tuesday 2nd - 8am-8pm
- **Aldi:** Friday 23rd - 7am-10pm; Saturday 24th - 7am-6pm. Closed on 25th-26th. Tuesday 27th-Friday 30th - 8am-8pm. Saturday 31st - 8am-6pm. Closed on Sunday 1st. Monday 2nd - 8am-8pm.
- **Co-Op:** Saturday 24th - 7am-8pm. Closed on 25th. Monday 26th - 8am-8pm. Saturday 31st - 7am-7pm. Sunday 1st - 8am-8pm; larger branches 10am-4pm.
- **Iceland:** Saturday 24th - 8am-5pm. Closed on 25th-26th. Saturday 31st - 8am-5pm. Monday 1st - most branches open 10am-4pm.
- **Lidl:** Friday 23rd - 7am-10pm; Saturday 24th - 7am-6pm. Closed on 25th-26th. Tuesday 27th-Friday 30th - 8am-10pm. Saturday 31st - 8am-7pm. Closed on Sunday 1st. Monday 2nd - 8am-8pm.
- **M&S:** Saturday 24th - most M&S Foodhall stores open until 6pm-7pm. Closed on 25th-26th. Saturday 31st - most M&S Foodhall stores open from 8am-7pm. Sunday 1st - closed.
- **Morrisons:** Saturday 24th - most stores open from 6am-6pm. Closed on 25th. Monday 26th - 9am-6pm. Friday 30th - 7am-10pm. Saturday 31st - 7am-7pm. Sunday 1st - 10am-4pm.
- **Sainsbury's:** Saturday 24th - most stores open from 6am-7pm. Closed on 25th. Monday 26th - larger stores open from 10am-5pm. Tuesday 27th - larger stores open from 8am-8pm. Saturday 31st - 7am-7pm. Sunday 1st - most stores open 10:30am-4:30pm or 12pm-6pm. Monday 2nd - most stores open 8am-8pm.
- **Tesco:** Friday 23rd - most larger stores open 24 hours. Saturday 24th - larger stores open until 6pm-7pm. Closed on 25th. Express stores typically open 9am-6pm on Monday 26th. Saturday 31st - 6am-6pm for larger stores; 7am-10pm for most Express stores.. Sunday 1st - 10am-4pm for larger stores; Express stores from 8am-10pm.
- **Waitrose:** Saturday 24th - most stores open from 8am-6pm. Closed on 25th-26th. Tuesday 27th - 9am-6pm. Saturday 31st - 8am-6pm. Closed on 1st. Monday 2nd - 9am-6pm.

Banks, post, bins etc.

Bank opening dates and times:

All bank branches will be closed on the 25th, 26th and 27th of December and on the 1st and 2nd of January, as all those dates are Bank Holidays.

Opening hours on the 24th and 31st vary between different banks and building societies - check with your local branch first.

Opening hours on all other dates in between vary too - again, it is best to check with your local branch first.

Post delivery and collection days

Please be aware that due to strike action by Royal Mail staff, delivery and collection dates will be affected. They are on strike on the 15th, 23rd and 24th of December.

Deliveries or collections will not take place on the 25th, 26th, 27th, 1st or 2nd. A full list of delivery and collection dates can be found on the Royal Mail website: <https://www.royalmail.com/christmas/last-posting-dates>

Bin collection dates

- If your normal bin day is between Monday 19th and Saturday 24th December, your bin day will be one day earlier than usual. If your normal bin day is on Monday 26th December, it will be two days earlier on the 24th instead.
- There will be no change to collection dates from Tuesday 27th December onwards.

Leeds City Council's Household Waste and Recycling Centres are only closed on the 25th, 26th and 1st. More information on recycling is available here: <https://leeds.gov.uk/recycling>

Strike information

During Christmas, a number of workers in different sectors will be on strike on various dates. Services affected include hospitals, railways, universities and parts of the civil service.

The Guardian have put together a calendar with dates that workers from different sectors are on strike in December, available on their website here: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/dec/12/uk-strike-days-calendar-the-public-service-stoppages-planned-for-december>

Please note that in the event of negotiations taking place between striking unions and their employers, some strike dates may be suspended.

Christmas/New Year 2022/23: Three-week Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th Christmas Eve
25th Christmas Day	26th Boxing Day - Bank Holiday	27th Xmas Bank Holiday	28th	29th	30th	31st New Year's Eve
1st New Year's Day	2nd New Year Bank Holiday	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th

Contact Us



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Facebook: [Leeds Autism AIM](https://www.facebook.com/LeedsAutismAIM)

YouTube: [Leeds Autism AIM](https://www.youtube.com/LeedsAutismAIM)

Leeds Autism AIM are part of The Advonet Group, an independent advocacy charity based in Leeds.

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